

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. An image forming apparatus, comprising:  
a plurality of imaging units;  
a loading unit formed on a top face of a  
main body of the image forming apparatus;

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a discharging unit disposed at an operation  
side of the main body, wherein an image-formed  
recording medium is discharged through the  
discharging unit to the loading unit; and

15

a plurality of developer containing members  
disposed in the main body, the developer containing  
members being arranged in a direction extending from  
the operation side of the main body, and the  
developer containing members providing the  
corresponding imaging units with developer;

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wherein  
the developer containing members are  
detachable from the main body of the image forming  
apparatus, and can be handled in a space above the  
image forming apparatus.

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2. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
5 in claim 1,

wherein, as the developer containing member  
becomes distant from the operation side, the  
developer containing member is disposed at a higher  
position.

10

3. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
15 in claim 2,

wherein

the loading unit can be opened around a  
rotative center unit disposed at a position beyond  
the developer containing members.

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4. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
25 in claim 3,

wherein

the rotative center unit is disposed at a position lower than a highest portion of the developer containing member that is most distant from the discharging unit.

10                    5. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 3,

wherein

the rotative center unit includes an axle unit provided in the main body, the axis of the axle unit being in width directions of the main body, and  
15                    a bearing unit provided in the loading unit, the bearing unit being supported by the axle unit.

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6. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 3,

wherein

25                    the loading unit can be opened in

directions extending from and approaching to the operation side.

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7. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 3, further comprising:

an operations panel disposed on a facing of  
10 the main body positioned at the operation side of the image forming apparatus;

wherein

the loading unit can be rotatively opened to a position higher than the facing on which the  
15 operations panel is disposed.

20 8. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 7,

wherein

a highest portion of the loading unit is as high as a highest portion of the facing on which the  
25 operations panel is disposed.

5                    9. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 1,

                  wherein

                  a lowest portion of the loading unit is  
lower than a highest portion of the developer  
10 containing member disposed at a lowest position.

15                    10. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 1, further comprising:

                  a paper feeding cassette detachably  
provided in the main body, the paper feeding cassette  
storing a recording medium on which an image is to be  
20 formed.

25                    11. The image forming apparatus as claimed

in claim 10,

wherein the paper feeding cassette can be  
attached to and detached from the main body in  
directions extending from and approaching to the  
5 operation side of the main body.

10 12. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 1, further comprising:

an openable tray provided on the main body,  
on which a recording medium can be stacked;

wherein

15 the loading unit and the openable tray can  
be opened within a range of a width of the main body.

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13. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 12,

wherein

the openable tray can be opened backward  
25 from the operation side.

5                   14. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 1,

                  wherein

                  the loading unit is a portion of a facing  
of the main body covering the developer containers.

10

                  15. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
15 in claim 1,

                  wherein

                  the loading unit extends from an end unit  
under the discharging unit to a direction extending  
from the discharging unit, and has a plurality of  
20 ribs protruding upward thereon.

25                   16. The image forming apparatus as claimed

in claim 15,

wherein

the manner in which the ribs are disposed  
is substantially spoke-wise from a center at an end  
5 unit side of the loading unit.

10 17. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 15,

wherein

the quantity of the ribs is three.

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18. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 1,

20 wherein

a plurality of curves protruding upward is  
formed on a surface of the loading unit in width  
directions.

25



19. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 1,

5                   wherein

the surface of the loading unit is slanted  
in a substantially same manner as the developer  
storage members are slanted.

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20. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 1,

15                   wherein

the imaging units are disposed at a slant  
in the same direction as the developer containing  
members; and

a surface of the loading unit is formed at  
20 a slant in the same direction as the imaging units.

25                   21. The image forming apparatus as claimed

in claim 1, further comprising:

an intermediate transfer unit disposed at a slant substantially in the same direction as the developer containing members;

5                wherein

an image formed by the imaging units is transferred to the intermediate transfer unit, and

a surface of the loading unit is formed at a slant in the same direction as the intermediate  
10 transfer unit.

15                22. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 1, further comprising:

an optical writing unit disposed at a slant in the same direction as the developer containing members, which optical writing unit writes an image

20 on each image retaining unit using a light beam;

wherein

a surface of the loading unit is formed at a slant in the same direction as the optical writing unit.

25

23. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
5 in claim 1, further comprising:

an optical writing unit that writes an  
image on an image retaining unit using a light beam;  
and

an intermediate transfer unit to which the  
10 image formed by the imaging unit is transferred;

wherein

the imaging unit, the optical writing unit,  
the intermediate transfer unit, and a surface of the  
loading unit are provided at a slant substantially in  
15 the same direction as the developer containing  
members.

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24. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 1,

wherein

the space required for handling the  
25 developer containing members is limited to width of

the main body, the width being perpendicular to directions in which the image-formed recording medium is discharged through the discharging unit

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25. An image forming apparatus,  
comprising:

a plurality of imaging units;

10 a loading unit formed on a top face of a  
main body of the image forming apparatus;

a discharging unit disposed at an operation  
side of the main body, wherein an image-formed  
recording medium is discharged through the

15 discharging unit to the loading unit; and

a plurality of developer containing members  
disposed in the main body, the developer containing  
members being arranged in a direction extending from  
the operation side of the main body, and the

20 developer containing members providing the  
corresponding imaging units with developer;

wherein

the developer containing member closest to  
the discharging unit is disposed at a lower position  
25 than the developer containing member most distant

from the discharging unit.

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26. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 25,

wherein

the discharging unit is disposed at a  
10 higher position than the position at which the  
developer containing member closest to the  
discharging unit is disposed, and at a lower position  
than the position at which the developer containing  
member most distant from the discharging unit is  
15 disposed.

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27. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 25,

wherein

the loading unit is configured in a manner  
in which a lowest portion thereof is lower than a  
25 discharging point of the discharging unit.

5                   28. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 25, further comprising:

an operations panel disposed on a facing of  
the main body positioned at the operation side of the  
image forming apparatus;

10                   wherein

the loading unit is configured in a manner  
in which a highest portion thereof is substantially  
as high as the facing on which the operations panel  
is disposed.

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20                   29. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 25,

wherein

the loading unit is configured in a manner  
in which a lowest portion thereof is disposed at a  
lower position than a position at which a highest  
25   portion of a lowest one of the developer containing

members is disposed.

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30. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 25,

wherein

the loading unit is a portion of a facing  
10 of the main body, the portion covering the developer  
containing members.

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31. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 25,

wherein

the loading unit extends from an end unit  
20 positioned below the discharging unit in a direction  
extending from the discharging unit; and

a plurality of ribs are provided on the  
loading unit, the ribs protruding upward from a  
surface of the loading unit.

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32. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
5 in claim 31,

wherein

the ribs are disposed substantially spoke-  
wise from a center at a side of the end unit of the  
loading unit.

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33. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
15 in claim 31,

wherein the quantity of the ribs is three.

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34. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 25,

wherein

a plurality of curves protruding upward is  
25 formed on a surface of the loading unit in directions



perpendicular to a direction in which a recording medium is discharged from the discharging unit.

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35. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25,

wherein

10 the loading unit is configured in a manner in which a surface thereof is slanted in the same direction as the direction in which the developer containing members are arranged.

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36. The image forming apparatus as claimed in claim 25,

20 wherein

the imaging units are disposed at a slant substantially in the same direction in which the developer containing members are disposed; and

a surface of the loading unit is disposed  
25 at a slant substantially in the same direction in

which the imaging units are disposed.

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37. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 25, further comprising:

an intermediate transfer unit disposed at a  
slant substantially in the same direction as the  
10 developer containing members;

wherein

an image formed by the imaging units is  
transferred to the intermediate transfer unit, and

a surface of the loading unit is formed at  
15 a slant in the same direction as the intermediate  
transfer unit.

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38. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 25, further comprising:

an optical writing unit disposed at a slant  
in the same direction as the developer containing  
25 members, which optical writing unit writes an image

on each image retaining unit using a light beam;

wherein

a surface of the loading unit is formed at  
a slant in the same direction as the optical writing  
5 unit.

10 39. The image forming apparatus as claimed  
in claim 25, further comprising:

an optical writing unit that writes an  
image on an image retaining unit using a light beam;  
and

15 an intermediate transfer unit to which the  
image formed by the imaging unit is transferred;

wherein

the imaging unit, the optical writing unit,  
the intermediate transfer unit, and a surface of the  
20 loading unit are provided at a slant substantially in  
the same direction as the developer containing  
members.

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